

DOE Transportation Protocols Topic Group Conference Call Summary May 13, 1999

The Transportation External Coordination Working Group (TEC/WG) Protocols Topic Group held a conference call on May 13, 1999, to discuss the status of U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) transportation protocols currently under development, and related issues. Participants on the call included: Mona Williams, DOE National Transportation Program-Albuquerque; Ken Niles, Oregon representative, Western Interstate Energy Board; Phillip Paull, Council of State Governments-Northeastern Conference; Ron Ross, Western Governors' Association; Lisa Sattler, Council of State Governments-Midwestern Office; Alex Thrower, Urban Energy & Transportation Corporation (UETC); and Elissa Turner, DOE-Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management.

Ms. Williams began the call by announcing that two protocols on prenotification and planning information had been drafted. The next protocol being developed is the routing protocol, and the complexity of the issue has resulted in its development taking longer than expected, she said. Ms. Turner added that the Writing Group, the DOE internal group responsible for drafting the protocols, had recently met, and that much of the routing discussion had been associated with potential requirements for low-level radioactive waste. She added that it is unclear whether a draft version would be ready in time for the Topic Group meeting in July or not, but said the group was working diligently.

Ms. Williams then stated the primary purpose for this call was to discuss the prenotification and planning information protocols, and to get comments from the participants. Some comments had already been obtained from one-on-one conversations with individual stakeholders, she said, but input from the Topic Group as a whole is needed as well, and this will also help focus the discussions the group has at its next meeting at the TEC/WG in July.

The following is a summary of the discussion points and comments on the two protocols:

Prenotification Comments

- "High-level waste" designation should be changed to "high-level materials and waste (to incorporate materials like cesium capsules).
- Some special materials, including unusual or "oddball" shipments, may require prenotification. Examples cited of such commodities for which prenotification should be given on included: radioactive materials that are liquid in nature; dual placarded materials (where the radioactive placard is not the primary); and pyrotechnic and highly hazardous materials. The tritium program shipments should also be included due to perception of the material.
- Prenotifications should include the isotopic mix and number of curies in the shipment description. A route description should also be included in the 7-day advance notification.
- DOE should ensure the information goes to the Governor's designee, not just the regional groups. Regional groups should be copied as well on the information.
- A named DOE point of contact should be included on prenotification information.
- To reduce paperwork and save time, DOE should place the WIPP 8-week rolling notification on email (in the message itself, not an attachment) with a receipt notification. DOE should also consider putting the WIPP 14-day notification on the same system.
- Including Tribal points of contact on the prenotification protocol is an excellent idea, but DOE may need to obtain NRC agreement for spent nuclear fuel shipments.

Planning Information Comments

- As currently configured, the protocol leaves it to individual programs to decide how and what information is given to stakeholders in the planning cycle [Note: this was a DOE comment in discussion].
- The protocol should be streamlined and not be so program specific. Do not leave the determination of what information to provide to the discretion of the program office or it will not get done nor be consistent.
- Put all program information in one place and format, such as the Prospective Shipment Module (PSM). The information could be placed on a secure Internet site.
- The information should be updated on a quarterly basis, and it should be a rolling schedule that is updated appropriately.
- DOE should have a named DOE point of contact (as in the prenotification comment) for planning information.
- The information should include: the planning horizon for the shipment (length of shipment campaign); a reference to the relevant EIS or ROD in comment column (if appropriate); and planning information for the oddball shipments described in the prenotification comments.
- There needs to be a tie between the planning information and prenotification processes. The decision whether prenotification is necessary can be made on the oddball type shipments during the planning process.
- Regarding a graded approach on giving less information on less risky shipments, participants said that a graded approach is necessary.

- Basic information is needed for all campaigns with high visibility or large volumes. Two criteria were offered to determine whether information should be given out: (1) if something goes awry with the shipment, will the governor care? (2) will the people that may be responding in the event of an incident need special training?
- Providing a sensible balance of information is important, because if too much information is given on shipments, then people will disregard the information altogether.

Following these discussions, the group decided that an additional conference call before the July meeting would not be necessary. The group adjourned at approximately 12:00 p.m. Eastern time.